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The Missionary

IN RELATION TO

LITERATURE.

From

BY THE

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PREFACE.

This paper was written for the Centennial Missionary Conference of 1888, and read before that body by the Rev. Dyson, (*see* Report of Centennial Conference Vol. II., p. 258.) It is published in a separate form to make it accessible to friends of the work here in India with a few corrections.

H. U. W.

April 1889.

THE MISSIONARY IN RELATION TO LITERATURE.

It is, happily, needless to prove to persons conversant with Missionary work that the formation of a Christian literature is an essential part of Missionary work in any given nation. The question which practically concerns us now, is the relative importance of literary as compared with other aspects of Missionary work, and the best means and methods for promoting it.

Experience of India.

In treating this subject I can speak personally of India only; and in India I have had to do chiefly with publications in Urdu. But the Urdu language is, from a literary point of view, the most widely extended tongue in India: that is to say, it probably reaches the largest number of readers, and it is also the best furnished with general and Christian literature. Moreover India offers a wider field of observation and deduction than any other Mission field, ranging from the most finished products of Western science and education in the Presidency cities and provincial capitals, to the merest savages in their hilly retreats. Hence the observations here recorded and the deductions attempted may, perhaps, have an application wider than the area from which they proceed.

What then are the special difficulties and special opportunities which the experience of the present juncture emphasises in respect of the literary work of Missions?

Difficulties in adapting.

To mention the chief difficulty, first, I would say that, excluding strictly spiritual opponents, it is the same which meets us throughout our modern missions, the wide difference of race and civilization between the evangelist and the evangelised. And this it is

which renders it so difficult to adapt our literary work both in form and matter to those for whom it is intended, so that it may appeal to their faculties and influence them permanently. The area influenced by Western ideas is continually and rapidly enlarging, without a corresponding increase of power on the part of the Missionary body to cover it with Christian literature. To take only one instance. The early leaders of higher English education in India were Missionaries like Duff and Wilson, into the fruits of whose labours we have entered and are still entering.

The need of literature.

But since their day this higher education has fallen—not through a relaxation of effort on the part of Missionaries, but through the increased activity of the State—for the most part into the hands of the Government institutions, while primary education has received an enormous impulse. Most of the youths who receive the higher education engage either in Government service or in the legal profession; and both during and after their training they are schooled in a system of religious neutrality often amounting to indifference. Thus, in addition to the old world of India, which offered its peculiar difficulties, Christian literature now has to reach a new generation. There are still the ignorant and illiterate masses; still a community educated on the old indigenous lines, with more or less of Hindu or Muhammadan classical knowledge; but there is also a community educated by Western methods, many through English, more through the vernacular tongues; some quite or nearly up to the standard of English scholars, others occupying an intermediate position between this and the purely vernacular reader, while even his language is receiving a strong dash of English words, uncouth as they look in their Indian dress. And yet, near as he may come to Western notions, the Indian is still an Indian in mind and disposition, and as such he must be approached. The many sided sympathy

in tone, the wide variety in form, needed to meet all these classes, must be found in Mission literature, if it is not to fall behind in its great vocation.

With the difficulty of adequately performing a task of such increasing complexity, a corresponding opportunity is closely bound up. The *spread of knowledge*, resulting from the rapid advance of education is opening an ever-widening door to Mission literature. A supply of readers is being prepared much faster than a supply of good reading. Western knowledge and acquaintance with English is eagerly sought for, so that the Missionary—pressed as he is by his own proper work—finds himself seriously confronted by the question of pure literature for the people. At no previous period has the increase of the reading community in India been so rapid; and the ratio of progress promises to increase. Before the Education Commission in 1882, the number of scholars was estimated at 2,000,000; it is now computed at 3,500,000, the increase being chiefly in the primary department. Not all of these become regular readers, but the majority will require some mental food.

Increase of readers.

The third feature of the Mission-field which bears upon literary work just now is the *growth of the Christian community*. The rates of increase in the three decades, preceding 1882, were as follows:—

Growth of Christian community.

1851—61	...	... 51 per cent.
1861—71	...	... 61 „
1871—81	...	... 86 „

At the end of 1881 there were 417,372 Protestant Native Christians in India. For this community, as it increases in numbers and grows in intelligence, a Christian literature is more needed every year; and it is only in a well-taught Christian Church that we have a reasonable hope of permanence and self-propagation.

To set forth the practical conclusions which flow from these facts it may be useful to borrow the terms of political economy, and consider Mission literature in respect of its production, its distribution, and its consumption. And as its consumption is the practical end that we wish to attain, it may be taken first.

1. The Consumption of Mission Literature.*

Consumption depends upon demand. How enormously the demand for literature generally is being increased by the educational work now going on, I have already pointed out. Between 1882 and 1885, the pupils in Government and aided schools in India increased by some eight hundred thousand.† Of the three-and-a-half millions now under instruction, some two hundred thousand are in Mission schools. For these readers literature of a sort is forthcoming. I have not the means of obtaining full statistics, but I may refer to the figures given by Dr. Murdoch in his Paper [read at the same Conference], showing that 8,963 publications were regis-gistered during 1886 in British India. Of these, the largest number in any one language (1,485) were in Urdu; and judging by the Panjab publications of a few years previous, we may roughly estimate that the percentage of subjects was as follows :—

Increased demand for literature.

Religion	... 25
Poetry, Fiction, and Drama ...	... 37
Education ...	... 25
Other subjects ...	... 13
	100

Of the first class a certain number, perhaps a sixth, are Christian works. The second class of books and pamphlets are largely

* I use this term in preference to "Missionary Literature," as the latter might be understood to mean Missionary magazines, biographies, and the like.

† This increase may include a considerable number of schools already existing, which came under Governmental inspection and cognisance during the period named, but even this connotes an important increase in the effectiveness of the education given.

demoralising; while the third again include a sprinkling of Christian books, published chiefly by the Christian Vernacular Education Society. With the exception of these school books, most of the Christian works have a limited circulation, especially those of any size. The other languages of North India are relatively less well supplied with Christian books than Urdu.

Pernicious literature.

From these facts we gather that the Vernacular books, which are read for purposes other than studious or professional are, to a great extent, morally pernicious. And this applies also, in great measure, to the English literature favoured by young India, so far as it is secular. Secularism and free love go hand in-hand to furnish the mental food of many English-reading natives; nor is this a result to be wondered at, when we consider the secular character of education in Government schools. The Government of India, in its memorandum of the 31st December, 1887, on moral education, has shown its sense of this dangerous tendency, and its desire to check it, by the introduction into schools and colleges of moral text-books, and by other means. It is obvious that such efforts need to be accompanied by the provision of a pure literature, which will, in due course, be more largely demanded by a purer generation, and which tends to produce the frame of mind that perpetuates such a demand. To such efforts the Literary Missionary (when he has been evolved) will give all the help that he can spare from his direct Christian work.

Reading on the increase.

The demand for literature, further, will depend not only upon the number of people who possess the ability to read, but also upon their will to use it, *i.e.*, on the reading habits they have formed. That reading habits are on the increase cannot be doubted; but, so far as my observation and the testimony I have been able to gather go, such habits are weak, considering the number of

possible readers. The only literature excepted from this neglect is newspapers; these are overlooked by very few who pretend to education.

Christian literature in the Missions.

In this matter of reading the Missionary is able to influence substantially two classes of the community, the native Christians and pupils in Mission schools, and he should see to it that he does his best to promote reading habits and a taste for good literature among them. Every school and every congregation should have its lending library, to be kept replenished with the most attractive books to be had, and new books or tracts or new editions which come out, should be brought to the notice of the Christian community or the pupils of the school, by the colporteur and others. To do this systematically will prove no small stimulus to the consumption of our literature; and the student, once inoculated with a taste for it, will desire its further gratification. It is, however, most important for us to consider that, owing to the great extension of Government education, and the pressure on Mission schools of examinations and education codes, squeezing down religious instruction to a minimum, the provision of Christian literature for the army of readers is rapidly overshadowing the question of conveying a limited amount of Christian instruction to the comparatively few who attend Mission schools.

Importance of newspapers.

This leads us to two conclusions. First, *the importance of newspapers.* Each language area should have a good Christian vernacular newspaper, vigorously supported and well-pushed; and each great centre, at least each Presidency town, an evangelistic organ, doing also the work of a literary paper—similar to *Progress*, so excellently conducted at Madras.

The second point is *the increasing importance of English as an element in Missionary literature.* Here the popular demand

is really increasing. Mr. H. E. Perkins (C. M. S., Amritsar, late Commissioner of Rawalpindi) writes: "Natives have in many places, *e. g.*, in Rawalpindi, instituted English lending libraries among themselves." Many an English book of distinctly religious tendency will be acceptable for the sake of its literary merit or interest, where a vernacular book of similar tone would be passed by. The English sales of our religious book depositories, therefore, have a direct Missionary value, if rightly used.

2. The Distribution of Mission Literature.

Distribution by sale or gift.

Distribution must doubtless depend upon demand on the one side and production on the other, but the method by which it is carried on will do much to influence both. The question is raised in the Conference programme, as to whether distribution should be gratuitous or by purchase. If we are aiming to place our literary work on a solid and permanent basis, this can only be on the basis of a real popular demand for such literature as we supply. The demand which we can reasonably expect will be, first, on the part of the Christian community for its own edification and for evangelising purposes; and, second, on the part of outsiders who desire from motives of curiosity or spiritual unrest to know the Christian religion; or who are in part so favourably disposed towards Christianity that they welcome books with a certain amount of Christian teaching. Hence a rule has been adopted, since the Allahabad Missionary Conference of 1872, by the Indian Tract Societies, that all supplies of books must be paid for by the persons who order them, whether Missionaries or others. This throws the question of free distribution on the purchasers, and places a definite limit to it, inasmuch as Mission funds will seldom permit of free distribution of Christian books to any large extent But it is obvious that the tendency of distribution should be from free gifts towards purchase; and to say

that a man, notably an Indian, will value and read what he purchases more than what he receives gratis, is to utter a truism.

Commercial principles.

What we need in the distribution of our Mission literature is that commercial principles should be more fully applied to it. I will take only two points. The first is attention to details. For instance, in regard to the get-up of books. Such matters as the best arrangement of the title page, proper tables of contents, the best style of binding, having regard to the nature and use of the book, advertising other publications on the fly leaves, the various minutiæ of typography, and a hundred other things demand attention. Again, in the sale room, showing up the stock without exposing it to damage from glare, weeding out old stock, advertising new arrivals, sending out specimens by colporteurs, looking out for new openings; all this, and much more, has to be considered with care and vigilance. More especially, a *constant improvement* must be kept up, otherwise distribution infallibly suffers. In these respects, we must confess our Indian Publishing Societies have much leeway to make up. The second point simply follows on the first, I mean the need of *efficient supervision*. How can vigilance be without a *vigilans*, watchfulness without a watcher? And how can one watch the distribution of literature when he has his own proper work to look after? Yet this is, with scarcely an exception, the position of every Missionary and layman in India, upon whom the guidance of literary work devolves. And, if we consider that the circulation of Mission literature has hitherto been carried on thus as a by-work, we can only be thankful to God for the extension which He has permitted it to attain. Moreover, if we regard the only instance that I am acquainted with, of a European Missionary entirely devoted to literary work,—I refer to my honoured friend, Dr. John Murdoch, of Madras,—

Adequate supervision.

we cannot but keenly feel how much more might be done were more men of the right kind assigned to sub-divide the labour of this immense task. The Church of Christ must enlarge her ideas of Missionary work. We need laymen acquainted with the book trade, yet full of a desire to win souls, who will devote themselves, with no thought of worldly gain, on the same footing as other Missionaries, to the work of pushing the sale of Mission literature in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Allahabad and Lahore, without neglecting the many opportunities for direct evangelisation that will come in their way. Will Christian England give us such?

Must enlarge our ideas.

Before passing on to the last part of my subject, I will touch on two more points connected with the distribution of literature. The first is the desirableness of having in every town Mission something of the nature of an institute to supplement the ordinary bookshop or colportage; a place in which there is a lending library, books for sale, a paper or two to read, and a Catechist, or other preacher in attendance; the same place serving also for preaching and lectures.

Two points.

The other point is that, as already urged, pupils in schools and colleges should be encouraged to buy books and tracts not only vernacular, but English; and that these should be more widely used in prize distribution.

3. The Production of Mission Literature.

Production is of two kinds, material and mental. Under the first head comes the question of the *Mission Press*, mentioned in the programme; under the second that of *Authorship*.

The Mission Press.—The value of the Mission Press in a country such as India rests, of course, on grounds different from those which necessitate such an institution, say, in Madagascar. There is now an

The Mission Press.

eager competition for printing work in the way of regular trade. Still the Mission Press has its value, if efficiently supervised, inasmuch as it frees the Publishing Society from the disadvantages of competition, and affords a guarantee for correctness of proof-reading and goodness of work. The Press should print Missionary work at a rate which will just cover expenses (not including the Superintendent's salary), and outside work should only be done as a resource when Mission work is not at hand, at ordinary market rates. Above all, the Superintendent of the Press should be a missionary layman, acquainted with printing work, and assigned to that as his special duty.

Last, not least, comes the matter of *Authorship*. The Christian vernacular books that we have, do all credit to those who produced them; but the mass of them are only first attempts, and stand in great need of revision and improvement, to render them fitted for our present needs, and the rise in the standard of education. Useless will be the pushing of sales, vain all improvement in the get-up of books, only saddening the demand for Christian reading, unless we can improve in the matter of Authorship, both by engaging the services of fresh talent and experience, and by developing the gifts of those who already work. Who, then, is to do this? Who is to watch the needs of his province, to inquire after literary workers, native and European; to suggest to them the part that each shall take, to unify and press forward the production of Christian books in each of the great languages of India? *We wust have* Literary Missionaries, one at least for each language area.

Authorship.

To quote from words previously written on the same subject :—

"The production and distribution of Christian literature is a distinct phase of Missionary work, the supervision of which needs *men distinctly devoted to the work*. Till the Church of Christ and its handmaidens, the Missionary Societies, recognise this as an axiom, and till men of recognised ability are set apart for the purpose, our literary work will remain, as it has hitherto, more or less defective. Considering the haphazard manner in which the work

of Christian literature has been allowed by Missionary authorities to shift for itself, we cannot but be most thankful for the amount of progress made. When we reflect that, generally speaking, the work has been done chiefly as a *parergon* by those whose time was already fully occupied, it is no small matter for congratulation that there should be works on most subjects extant, all of which contain a great deal that our young Christian communities need to be taught, and some of which put that instruction in a clear and attractive manner. At the same time we cannot but feel that much of the work is more imperfectly done than it need be, and that what has been done is not always brought to bear in the most effective manner on the spiritual needs of the people."

To show the feeling of not a few Missionaries on this point I add part of a letter received from one who is labouring in a great stronghold of Hinduism:—

"It makes me sad and impatient at the same time to see how little regard our Society pays to the great need of pushing forward the literary branch of Missionary labour. There are some thirty periodicals of the Arya Samaj published in Hindi and Urdu, dealing with religious questions either in a spirit indifferent or hostile to Christianity. Our Society, big as it is in comparison with the Arya Samaj, publishes none in these dialects. Books also, like those I have mentioned before, are sadly needed. Some time ago, on two different occasions, two Hindu gentlemen argued with me about that wretched farce Theosophism: I do not think any of our tracts deal with this matter. A Muhammadan pleader who is dissatisfied with Islam has come to me to argue about the difficulties of Genesis I., and the proof of the existence of a personal God. A Pandit (the spiritual tutor of some prince in the Agra Government College) the other day argued with me among other matters about the apparent disproportion between man's sin and condemnation, further how our Blessed Saviour being born of Mary could have been free of the taint of original sin. Now what tracts or commentaries in the vernacular have we on these subjects?

"Natives are publishing tracts exactly on the same lines as Ram-pariksha, &c. I have such an one bearing the title Isupariksha, and a Native Christian preacher, whom I had made peruse it said to me: "Sahib, a man who has read Isupariksha will now not be induced by Rampariksha to give up Ram." Another pamphlet, "self-contradictions of the Bible," in Hindi has fallen into my hands.* What ARE we doing to counteract these publications? In one respect of course it is matter for rejoicing to see them, for they plainly show that the natives are advancing more and more from the stage of indifference and dormancy as regards Christian influences to the second stage of opposition (the secret mainspring of which is fear!) By and by, *Deo adjuvante*, we shall have the third stage—that of conviction, and then the fourth and final one—that of conversion and profession—will be reached!"

* * * * *

But while emphasizing the need for Literary Missionaries, I would also add the expression of a conviction that the true "Literary Missionary" cannot be merely a man who will sit in a corner and write. Our literature is intended to influence the thoughts and lives of men, and he who would produce it must have some practical acquaintance with both. I do not know the qualifications which are needed can be better described than in the words of the Rev. J. Hewlett of Benares in a paper read before the Calcutta Decennial Conference of 1882-83.

"First, there must be brought about in the soul of the writer, by the power of the Holy Spirit, an intensely earnest experience of the great spiritual struggle which is being carried on by the kingdom of Christ to gain the victory over Hinduism and Mahomedanism. All good literature is a distillation of the most stirring events of the age through the mind of the writer. No valuable

* I myself lately heard from a young Hindu convert that when he was inquiring Hindus had plied him with a book entitled "Baibalwirudh," or "Anti-Bible." This seems to be the same as, or similar to, the one mentioned.—H. U. W.

vernacular Christian literature can be produced unless the soul of the writer in loyalty to Christ has entered the thickest of the battle to establish His kingdom in India.

"Secondly, the writer must feel, together with a burning hatred of idolatry and superstition and all other sin, an intense Christ-like love of the people. A knowledge of their language is far from sufficient. There must be a sympathetic knowledge of the people themselves, gained from close intercourse with them, from hearing their daily troubles and daily joys, a knowledge which deeply realises their wants and yearns to satisfy them.

"Thirdly, the literature on which the minds of the people feed should be studied, however distasteful. The Hindi-speaking community make the *Prem Sagar* and the *Ramayana* their greatest spiritual nourishment. The style of these books pleases their taste, just as the stories of Krishna and Rama contained in them enchant their souls. Without a mastery of such books how is it possible to make the best of matter attractive to readers to whom they have been the greatest delight?

"Fourthly, there should be a thorough knowledge of the Hindu and Mohamedan systems. To a considerable extent, sufficient perhaps for popular writings, such a knowledge can be gained from English books. But in order to be completely equipped, to make the press a successful Missionary agency in India, such an understanding of the full strength of Hinduism and Mohamedanism is necessary as can only be acquired by a deep study of those religions in their original writings."

"Of course it is presupposed that the writer has already acquired a thorough mental training previous to his entry on the mission-field. Philosophy, linguistic study, literature, business training—these and many other forms of mental culture will all contribute their quota."

Missionaries devoted to literature.

I am not insensible of two qualifications to this plea for the appointment of Literary Missionaries. One is suggested by the Rev. R. Clark, of Amritsar, who has worked in this cause as few have, that well-known authors in England might do not a little to help us by writing short papers or articles with special reference to the religious doubts and difficulties of Indians. Still it is only a small part of the needed work which can thus be done. The other consideration is of more weight. It is that we foreigners are but working to prepare the way for the natives of India itself, and that our chief care should be to train them for the work of providing a Christian literature for their own land. Most true this is. We foreign Missionaries desire nothing more ardently than to be able to pass on the torch to Indians. But now there is the conflict, and in the midst of it the work to be set forward, as the walls of Jerusalem were built by Nehemiah and his companions, for at least a temporary shelter; and in this the more

highly-endowed brother who has come from without must, as yet, lead the denizens of the land. Moreover, it is just because the work of training or eliciting literary ability in the Indian Church, is so vastly important, that special men are needed to do it. When, in the name of Christ, will they be given?

The question is raised in the programme of this Conference as to how far the Missionary may devote himself generally to the work of pure literature? I reply: Give the Missionary, whom God has so called, leisure, first of all, to devote himself to the work of Christian literature, and when he has surveyed and assayed this field in earnest, we will then begin to discuss what time he can spare for the remoter work.

Missionary reserves.

The appointment of Literary Missionaries is part of a larger question: that of *Missionary reserves.* The Literary Missionary, as has already been shown, cannot be a neophyte. Experience in general Missionary work is a necessary pre-requisite for his calling. But how can Missionaries of experience be set free for this work under the present system of distributing our forces? No sooner, in the majority of cases, does a Mission appear strongly manned, than some of the staff are drafted off "to enter a fresh door." The first Mission is reduced to the strength barely necessary for the maintenance of the work; a vacancy occurs through death or sickness; and once more the mournful cry goes forth: "Undermanned." Is any earthly warfare carried on as we prosecute, for the most part, this campaign of Christ's kingdom? What general would dare systemically to fight without reserves? And what treatment would be accorded to one who did so, when he met with well-merited defeat? Does any business succeed on such principles? If it is immoral to extend our pecuniary obligations, especially where others are involved, beyond the limit at which we can reasonably hope to meet them, what shall we say of the

policy of extending our spiritual liabilities when we are inadequately fulfilling those which we have already contracted? Let us not in such cases speak of a "call." The best of works engaged in outside the line of God's moral guidance becomes a decoy. Nor let us cover the rashness with the name of "faith." By all means let us go forward in faith; but let us first apply that faith to the provision of proper resources for the prosecution of the work in hand, by accumulating some reserves to supply deficiencies which we know by experience will constantly occur, calls which must arise within the limits of the field already entered on.